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We've got something for everyone: How individual differences predict different blogging motivations

Abstract

The principal aims of this study were to develop a Blogging Motivations Questionnaire (BMQ) and to test the hypothesis that sex, age, and personality would be associated with individual blogging motivations. One hundred and sixty bloggers completed the BMQ and the International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg, 1999). Six motivations for writing blogs were confirmed: personal revelation, emotional outlet, creative outlet, selective disclosure, social networking and advertising. Conscientiousness predicted the 'social networking' motivation, Agreeableness predicted 'selective disclosure' and Openness 'creative outlet'. Women were motivated by 'selective disclosure', and men for 'advertising' and as an 'emotional outlet'. Finally, older bloggers were motivated to use their blogs as a 'creative outlet'. With reference to the Uses and Gratifications paradigm, it is likely that bloggers actively construct blogs to satisfy very personal needs. Moreover, the types of needs that one wishes to satisfy are likely to vary with personality type and with one's age and sex.

Keywords

Blogging, motivations, personality, Uses and Gratifications, individual differences

Introduction

Since the arrival of the first hosted blog tools, blogging has provided a platform for individuals to promote messages to potentially worldwide audiences (Lang, 2005). The phenomenal rate with which blogging applications have increased in popularity may be partly credited to three factors. First, bloggers are free to express personal content (Herring et al., 2005a). Although this is not unique to the blogosphere, blogging facilitates self-presentation and self-expression because the asynchronous nature of communication encourages the careful editing of information (Guadagno et al., 2007). In turn this may lead to an optimised presentation of the self, linking to Walther's 'hyperpersonal theory' of communication (Walther, 1996; Walther and Parks, 2002). Second, blogs are accessible: they can be created and updated simply and without the requirement for specialised technical knowledge (Liao et al., 2011). Finally, the social nature of blogging is a major appeal (Miura and Yamashita, 2007). Indeed, communities of bloggers can be formed around subject association or via hypertext structure (e.g. 'linkback' methods) (Chin and Chignell 2006a, 2006b). The reasons why people keep blogs is a topic of considerable academic interest. An area which has received scant attention however relates to individual differences in blogging motivations. The current investigation aims to fill this gap by examining the relationship between personality, sex and age with blog motivations. Furthermore, this research focuses on blogs by ordinary people, rather than those which may attract very large audiences such as celebrity blogs.

Blogs may be defined simply as 'frequently updated webpages with a series of archived posts, typically in reverse-chronological order' (Nardi et al., 2004a: 222). Blogs are primarily text-based, however they may also include images, photographs or other types of multimedia content (Blood, 2002). Blogs may also be created entirely in video form. This type of blogging has been labelled as 'vlogs' or video blogs (Molyneaux et al., 2008). A

common feature between text-based blogs and vlogs is that they both include user-generated content that can serve a variety of purposes, for example social commentary or to document life experiences (Molyneaux et al., 2008). Many blog sites also have an interactive element, offering space to leave comments (Nardi et al., 2004a).

The topics that bloggers talk about vary considerably, as does the style in which they construct their blogs. Herring et al. (2004a) suggest that most blogs can be broken down into three main categories: personal journals (focussing on the blogger's personal life, thoughts and feelings), filter blogs (focussing on external events) and knowledge blogs (focussing on knowledge-sharing). Moreover, the majority of blogs (70%) are set up as personal journals. Fullwood et al. (2009) noted seven main functions of MySpace blogs: diary, advertising, providing information, gathering information, sharing media, emotional outlet and reporting other events. The most frequent function was for the blog to serve as a 'diary' or personal journal. They also found that most blogs were constructed in a semi-formal style, adopting a positive tone, which they linked to impression management. As bloggers have more control over how they present themselves through their blogs, it is not surprising that they generally come across favourably.

Motivations for constructing and maintaining blogs

Blogs vary in terms of content, purpose and style (Fullwood et al., 2009). Bloggers are also likely to hold different motivations for blogging. In other words, the purpose that the blog serves will be directly influenced by the blogger's motivation for keeping the blog – for example, in the case of advertising, this could be to share their love for a particular brand or to gain financial reward. Moreover, even though two bloggers may talk about the same topic, their motivations for blogging may still be very different. For instance, one blogger may talk about current events to inform and educate his/her audience, whereas another may do so to

vent frustrations about perceived injustices in the world. Simply looking at the surface content of the blog will therefore not provide a complete picture on why the blog was constructed. Thus, it is imperative that the blogger's underlying motivations are also taken into account.

Research has already attempted to identify different motivations for blogging. Self-expression, networking and identity management have all been cited as primary blogging motivations (Fullwood et al., 2009). Nardi et al. (2004b) noted five blogging motivations: to document life experiences, provide commentary and opinion, express deeply felt emotions, articulate ideas through writing and form and maintain community forums. Moreover, these motivations are not mutually exclusive as bloggers can hold more than one simultaneously. Huang et al. (2007) however suggested a degree of overlap between 'expressing emotions' and 'articulating ideas'. Rather, they propose that these both relate to self-expression, which has been cited as an important motivation for blog construction (e.g. Blood, 2002; Herring et al., 2005b). They also argue for a further category that Nardi et al. (2004b) did not consider: information seeking. As well as creating content, bloggers construct their blogs so that they can actively seek out information. For example, subscription services such as RSS (Rich Site Summary) feeds make information updating a simpler task for bloggers (Huang et al., 2007).

Huang et al. (2007) proposed five blog motivation categories: self-expression (e.g. video blogs), life-documenting (e.g. personal online diaries), commenting (e.g. political blogs), forum-participating (e.g. project blogs) and information-searching (e.g. aggregator blogs). Although these motivations are not mutually exclusive, the main motivation(s) that bloggers hold predicts blogging behaviour (e.g. how the blog is managed). Furthermore, they noted that social interaction through blogging influences the extent to which bloggers manage and update their blog. Bloggers with a higher level of audience awareness take more care over the content of their blog (e.g. by updating it more regularly). This links to previous

research suggesting that bloggers who receive feedback have a greater impetus to continue blogging (Kawaura et al., 1999; Liao et al., 2011). Although these findings are clearly interesting, they seem to ignore the possibility that not all blogs are written for public consumption. Rather, blogging may be a very private and personal activity for some (Mazur and Kozarian, 2010). It may be that some bloggers use their blogs for catharsis (Nardi et al., 2004b) and a responsive audience may be less important to bloggers who use their blogs to work through their own personal issues, because they are writing for themselves and not for others.

Personality and Internet use

To date, blogging research has attempted to distinguish different types of blog activity and elucidate bloggers' motivations for keeping blogs. Little research has considered where these motivations may come from. For instance, why might some individuals be motivated to keep their blogs for self-expression while others are motivated to connect with others? To answer this question, one should consider the role that an individual's personality plays in driving these motivations. Personality can be broadly defined as 'a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that uniquely influences his or her cognitions, motivations, and behaviours in various situations' (Ryckman, 2000: 5). Given the powerful influence that personality exerts on our interaction with the world around us, it seems likely that individual differences will also play an important role in driving our motivations for keeping blogs. A framework for considering the influence that personality has on our engagement with mass media is the Uses and Gratifications model. Simply stated, this audience-centred approach suggests that we all have individual needs, the origins of which can be traced to social and psychological constructs. Moreover, people have expectations about how engaging with mass media can meet these needs. These expectations lead to

different patterns of media exposure and if needs are met, users are more likely to continue engagement (Katz et al., 1974).

Research underpinned by Uses and Gratifications theory has explored links between personality and online behaviour. Findings generally suggest that people engage with the Internet in ways that are congruous with their offline personality profiles. Therefore, our personality influences the types of online activities that we are drawn to as well as how we interact, communicate and present ourselves to others online (see Orchard and Fullwood, 2010 for a review). For example, Extraversion is related to using the Internet to help sustain relationships at a distance and to support daily face-to-face relationships (Tosun and Lajunen, 2010). Because extraverts take pleasure from human interactions they are motivated to maintain numerous friendships. Although extraverts prefer socialising face-to-face, they may perceive the Internet as an important supplementary tool for maintaining and supporting social networks (Orchard and Fullwood, 2010). However, one should also not underestimate the potential that the Internet provides for some individuals to experiment with their identities. For instance, because there is an increased potential for anonymity online, certain individuals may feel more comfortable expressing aspects of their personality that they feel unable to convey offline (Bargh et al., 2002).

The current investigation draws on the five-factor model of personality or ‘Big Five’ (Goldberg, 1981), which is the most widely accepted trait taxonomy for modelling personality in Psychology (De Raad and Perugini 2002; McCrae and Costa, 1987). Additionally, a significant body of literature on personality and Internet use has already examined the five-factor traits (Guadagno et al., 2007). The Big Five model asserts that personalities vary in distinct and identifiable ways and can be measured on five mutually independent dimensions (Goldberg, 1981). It can be summarised as follows: Extraversion (outgoing, energetic) vs. Introversion (solitary, reserved); Openness to experience

(imaginative, curious) vs. Closed to experience (conventional, cautious); Emotional stability (calm, stable) vs. Neuroticism (anxious, moody); Agreeableness (friendly, compassionate) vs. Disagreeableness (cold, unkind); Conscientiousness (efficient, organised) vs. Unconscientiousness (easy-going, careless) (Goldberg, 1981; McCrae and Costa, 1987).

Personality and blogging behaviour

Various studies have examined the role that personality plays in predicting blogging behaviour; however few have considered specific motivations for blogging. In terms of blogging inclination, Openness is a trait particularly characteristic of bloggers (Guadagno et al., 2007; Oberlander and Nowson, 2006). This makes sense as Openness relates to creativity and imagination and self-expression is a strong motivation for blogging (Liao et al., 2011; Trammell et al., 2006). Guadagno et al. (2007) however suggest that this relationship is likely to change as blogging becomes more mainstream. At the time of data collection, blogging was perhaps still in its infancy and therefore they argue that Openness may be characteristic of early adopters (i.e. those who try out new forms of technology). Women scoring high in Neuroticism were also more likely to blog (Guadagno et al., 2007). The authors proposed that because women generally score higher on this trait than men (Costa Jr et al., 2001) their behaviour may be typical of what we would expect of them in the offline world. Women may turn to blogs to reduce loneliness and to connect with others; which is consistent with how highly neurotic women use the Internet generally (Amichai-Hamburger and Ben-Artzi, 2003; Hamburger and Ben-Artzi, 2000).

Further studies have considered the manner in which personality influences blog content. Gill et al. (2009) correlated language use in blogs with personality. Although they did not directly request information from bloggers on their motivations for blogging, they drew conclusions about motivations on the basis of blog style and content. Neurotic bloggers

used more negative emotion words, made more references to themselves and fewer references to others, suggesting that they are motivated to blog for self-therapy or catharsis. This links with Miura and Yamashita's (2007) suggestion that many bloggers write about themselves to gain a more advanced level of self-understanding, meaning they are better equipped to deal with their problems. Extravert bloggers talked more openly about themselves and others and were more likely to directly address the reader. This implies they are motivated to use their blog for interaction and to document life experiences. Open bloggers more regularly discussed leisure activities (e.g. the arts), used more negative words and included more first person pronouns. The authors argue that this may link to the use of blogs for review or evaluation; however it may also point to blogging as a creative outlet or for self-expression. Conscientious bloggers talked more often about mundane activities (e.g. their working lives), used more positive emotion words and referenced others frequently. This implies that they are motivated to write for commentary or to document their lives and experiences. Finally, agreeable bloggers used fewer negative emotion words, more positive emotion words and spoke about themselves in positive terms, suggesting a level of identity management. Although one may have expected a greater propensity for identity experimentation via blogs (e.g. because of the absence of 'gating features'), bloggers represented themselves in ways which were fairly consistent with their offline personality profiles.

Sex and age differences in blogging behaviour

Just as personality has been shown to play an important role in predicting patterns of blog consumption and behaviour, age and sex also have an influence on blog style and content. Men tend to blog about events external to their lives (filter blogging), whereas women focus almost exclusively on their own lives and experiences (diary blogging) (Fullwood et al.,

2013; Herring et al., 2004b). Men are more likely to claim ownership of their blogs (i.e. by including their name) and this may reflect a greater sense of confidence in what they have to say (Fullwood et al., 2013). Women, on the other hand, place greater importance on privacy, for example by remaining anonymous (Fullwood et al., 2013; Pedersen and Macafee, 2007). There is also evidence that younger bloggers write with more freedom (e.g. by swearing more often) and adopt a more emotional tone with negative expressions of emotions about others and the self (Fullwood et al., 2013). Women are said to be motivated by self-expression and use blogs as a creative outlet, whereas men create blogs to share information (Li, 2007; Lu and Hsiao, 2009; Pedersen and Macafee, 2007). Furthermore, women value the social nature of blogs more so than men and place greater importance on creating a sense of community. For instance, they are more likely to participate in group blogs and belong to more blog rings (i.e. groups which help connect bloggers with matching interests) (Pedersen & Macafee, 2007). This may be one reason why women receive more comments on their blogs than men (Mazur and Kozarian, 2010; Pedersen and Macafee, 2007).

The present investigation

We know that individual differences can distinguish bloggers from non-bloggers (Guadagno et al, 2007), but we currently have very little understanding about whether individual differences can differentiate between bloggers and their motivations for keeping blogs. Moreover, there has been much debate in the Cyberpsychology literature concerning whether some of the unique properties of the online world (e.g. the absence of ‘gating features’ and the potential for anonymity) present individuals with a greater degree of flexibility when it comes to experimenting with their identities whilst online. One would therefore not necessarily expect all personality types to behave in a manner which is consistent with their offline personality profiles. For example, the Internet has the potential to support both ‘social

compensation' (poor-get-richer hypothesis) and 'social enhancement' (rich-get-richer hypothesis) (see Zywicki and Danowski, 2008). Investigating individual differences in blogging motivations should therefore help to shed further light on these interesting phenomena.

In light of previous research, it was expected that personality, sex and age would predict individual blogging motivations. We expected extravert bloggers to be motivated by a need for social interaction; open bloggers for creativity and self-expression; conscientious bloggers for life-documenting and commentary; agreeable bloggers by a need to manage their online identity and neurotic bloggers to be motivated to blog for catharsis or self-therapy. We also expected female bloggers to blog for social interaction and self-expression and male bloggers to blog for commentary and review. In terms of age, we anticipated that younger bloggers would be motivated by a need for emotional expression.

Method

Participants

Participants were 160 bloggers (108 female and 52 male). The mean age of participants was 25.29 (SD=8.74) with an age range of 16-67.

Materials

Participants completed two questionnaires; the Blogging Motivations questionnaire (BMQ) and the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) (Goldberg, 1999). The item pool for the BMQ was informed by a review of the previous blog motivations literature and through analysing the 'about me' sections of bloggers from the blogging site blog.co.uk. Where bloggers explicitly stated their motivation for blogging, these statements were reworded into items. In each case, we took the words directly from the blog posts to create the items and

rephrased them to make them more generalisable to an array of associated and relatively similar activities, whilst staying as close as possible to the author's original meaning. For example, the statement 'this blog contains some of the problems that keep me up at night and it's intended to help me figure them out' refers to the item 'I use my blog to come to terms with difficulties in my life', whereas 'my blog is just a way for me to get things off my chest' refers to the item 'my blog is where I can have a good rant'. We aimed to compile a comprehensive list of items that covered the full spectrum of blogging motivations. Thus, we drew upon established theory as well as the explicitly stated motivations of current bloggers.

The BMQ was presented to participants in two sections. In the first section, participants supplied demographic information (sex and age) as well as information about their blogging activity (i.e. how often they blog). The second section of the questionnaire contained the item pool (58 items) and participants rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 'completely untrue' to 'very true') the extent to which each item accurately described their motivations.

Participants also completed the IPIP (Goldberg, 1999), a reliable measure of the Big Five Personality traits. Coefficient alphas for all five traits are good (Extraversion = .87; Agreeableness = .82; Conscientiousness = .79; Emotional Stability = .86; Openness = .84) (Goldberg, 1992).

Procedure

Participants were recruited through advertisements on relevant forums, the Association of Internet Researchers mailing list and the Psychology department's participant pool at the University of Wolverhampton, UK. We aimed to gather data from a diverse range of bloggers of various ages and backgrounds. To gather a contemporary perspective on blogging activity, only bloggers who had written their last blog post within 6 months of participation

were eligible. Data from participants using Twitter were excluded as this was not considered to be a true blogging site. In each instance where the study was advertised, a link to the online survey was provided. Participants were presented with an information page describing the study and consent to participate was given through clicking a button onscreen. Participants were then directed to the survey. On completion, a debriefing message was presented and participants were provided with the contact details of the researchers, should they have further questions.

Results

Blogging Motivations Questionnaire

Participants reported spending a mean of 7.9 hours (SD=11.01; range .5-100 hours) reading or writing blogs per week and had been blogging for a mean of 3.2 years (SD=2.64). Of the 160 participants, 54 (33.8%) reported using their real whole name, 54 (33.8%) their first name, 35 (21.9%) a pseudonym and 17 (10.6%) no name at all. Regarding images on the blog, 108 (67.5%) used an image of themselves and 116 (72.5%) included other images. With regards to interactions with other bloggers, 154 (96.3%) reported reading other blogs, 125 (78.1%) commented on other blogs, and 128 (80%) received comments on their blogs.

The initial item pool of 58 was subjected to exploratory factor analysis to determine the factor structure, and item reduction. A Monte Carlo simulation for eigenvalues based on the parallel method (Horn, 1965) suggested that a six-factor model for the exploratory factor analysis would be appropriate. To arrive at this, we ran 100 exploratory factor analyses with simulated pseudorandom data and took arithmetic means of eigenvalues across simulations (Hayton et al., 2004).

Previous literature suggests that blog motivations are not independent (e.g. Huang et al., 2007; Nardi et al., 2004b). Therefore we expected the blog motivations to be correlated,

so Principle Axis Factor analysis was conducted with Oblimin rotation. We calculated that for our sample size, factor loadings of .4 or greater could be deemed statistically significant, and so only these loadings were retained (see Field, 2005).

It was our intention to create a parsimonious and brief instrument, and therefore we conducted a process of item reduction, wherein we attempted to reduce the number of items in each subscale whilst retaining the highest possible internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha and inter-item correlations were used to whittle down the number of items per scale. Complex items that cross-loaded significantly were also removed at this stage.

Table 1: Factor loadings and internal reliability for the Blogging Motivations Scale

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Factor 1: Emotional Outlet						
My blog tells the world about things that make me angry	.931					
My blog is the place where I have a go at the world	.859					
My blog is where I write up any complaints that I've got	.840					
My blog is where I can have a good rant	.830					
My blog is the place where I can complain about things that I can't normally speak out loud about	.720					
I use my blog to promote my personal beliefs	.480					
Factor 2: Social Networking						
My blog is used to make new friends		.844				
My blog is a way to chat with my friends		.782				
I use my blog to keep in touch		.759				
My blog is used to meet other people with similar interests		.652				
My blog helps to keep my social life going		.598				
Factor 3: Advertising						
I advertise products on my blog			.905			
I use my blog to advertise services			.833			
I use my blog to advertise to others			.637			
My blog is where I promote events			.602			
Factor 4: Personal Revelation						
My blog is where I tell the world about who I love				.764		
My blog is where I tell the world about my relationships				.757		
I use my blog to come to terms with difficulties in my life				.595		
My blog is where I tell the world my darkest thoughts				.570		
Without my blog I'd have no social life				.494		
Factor 5: Creative Outlet						

My blog is where I can be creative					.793	
I can express my artistic side of my blog					.787	
My blog is used to show people who I am					.549	
My blog is used to educate others					.511	
I write my blog to share my interests with others					.482	
Factor 6: Selective Disclosure						
I use my blog to talk about the great things that have happened in my life						.723
I write my blog to share my achievements with others						.710
I blog because I can choose what parts of my life to share						.551
Cronbach's alpha	.877	.800	.783	.804	.659	.650

The final factor structure of the BMQ accounted for 62.33% of the variance. Assumptions of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 2105.55$; $p < 0.001$) and sampling adequacy were met (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin = 0.779). The final factor structure comprising of 28 items, can be seen in Table 1, including factor labels. We interpreted the factors by looking for commonalities amongst items that loaded onto a single factor. The final subscales have good internal consistency with alphas of .65 or higher (see Table 1).

Correlations

As expected, several of the factors were inter-correlated. 'Social networking' correlated positively with 'advertising' ($r = .358$, $p < .001$), 'personal revelation' ($r = .275$, $p < .001$), 'creative outlet' ($r = .181$, $p < .05$) and 'selective disclosure' ($r = .268$, $p < .001$). A positive association was observed between 'personal revelation' and 'emotional outlet' ($r = .430$, $p < .001$) and 'selective disclosure' ($r = .183$, $p < .05$). Finally, 'advertising' was positively associated with 'creative outlet' ($r = .160$, $p < .05$).

To test the hypothesis that blogging motivations would be associated with personality, sex and age, a series of regression analyses (Backward method) were performed.

Emotional outlet

Sex, Openness, and Emotional Stability explained 8.2% of the variance in predicting 'emotional outlet' as a motivation for blogging ($F(3, 156) = 4.667, p < .01$). Of the predictors, Sex (partial correlation = $-.208, t = -2.63, p < 0.01$) and Openness (partial correlation = $-.191, t = -2.46, p < .05$) made significant independent contributions to the explained variance. Emotional Stability was a non-significant predictor in the model (partial correlation = $-.138, t = -1.75, p > .05$). Thus, males and individuals scoring low on Openness were motivated to construct their blogs as an emotional outlet.

Social networking

Age, Conscientiousness and Intellect explained 13.5% of the variance in predicting 'social networking' as a motivation for blogging ($F(3, 156) = 8.083, p < .001$). Of the predictors, Conscientiousness (partial correlation = $.202, t = 2.67, p < .01$) and Openness (partial correlation = $-.327, t = -4.29, p < .001$) contributed significantly to the model. Age was a non-significant predictor in the model (partial correlation = $.137, t = 1.82, p > .05$). Therefore, individuals scoring high on Conscientiousness and bloggers scoring low on Openness were motivated to construct their blogs for social networking purposes.

Advertising

The predictors accounted for 15.3% of the variance in the motivation subscale 'advertising' ($F(2, 157) = 14.228, p < .001$). Of the predictors, Sex (partial correlation = $-.314, t = -4.23, p < .001$) and Openness (partial correlation = $-.281, t = -3.79, p < .001$) made significant independent contributions to the explained variance. Male bloggers and those scoring low on Openness were motivated to construct their blogs for advertising.

Creative outlet

The predictors accounted for 16.6% of the variance in the motivation subscale ‘creative outlet’ ($F(2, 157) = 15.622, p < .001$). Of the predictors, Age (partial correlation = .185, $t = 2.16, p < .05$) and Openness (partial correlation = .337, $t = 4.58, p < .001$) made significant independent contributions to the explained variance. Older bloggers and individuals scoring high on Openness were motivated to construct their blogs as a creative outlet.

Selective disclosure

Sex, Openness and Agreeableness explained 14.3% of the variance in predicting ‘selective disclosure’ as a motivation for blogging ($F(3, 156) = 8.706, p < .001$). Of the predictors, Sex (partial correlation = .228, $t = 2.97, p < .01$), Openness (partial correlation = -.207, $t = -2.66, p < .01$) and Agreeableness (partial correlation = .196, $t = 2.49, p < .05$) made significant independent contributions to the explained variance. Females, highly agreeable individuals and bloggers scoring low on Openness were motivated to selectively disclose in their blogs.

Non-significant effects

The predictors did not account for a significant percentage of the variance in ‘personal revelation’ ($R^2 = .062$; $F(7, 152) = 1.447, ns$) as a motivation for blogging.

Finally, a series of t-tests were conducted to ascertain whether there were any differences in blog motivations as a function of the bloggers’ social activity. There were no significant differences between bloggers who commented on other blogs ($n = 125$) and bloggers who did not comment on other blogs ($n = 34$) on all blog motivation factors. In terms of receiving comments, there was a significant difference on the ‘personal revelation’ factor ($t(156) = -.998, p < .05$). Bloggers who did not receive comments ($n = 30$; $M = .164$) were more likely to be

motivated to write for ‘personal revelation’ than bloggers who did receive comments on their blogs ($n=128$; $M=-.039$).

Discussion

The factor analysis of the BMQ identified six primary blogging motivations. ‘Personal revelation’ describes the extent to which bloggers are motivated to disclose their innermost thoughts and feelings. There is also a sense from the items that clustered around this factor that this motivation relates to using the blog for self-therapy (e.g. ‘I use my blog to come to terms with difficulties in my life’). ‘Emotional outlet’ describes the extent to which bloggers are motivated to express their opinions and vent frustrations. ‘Selective disclosure’ includes the use of the blog to selectively post positive information and may relate to identity management. ‘Creative outlet’ describes bloggers who are motivated by a need to express their individuality and creativity. Those who are motivated by ‘social networking’ use their blogs to connect with others and advance their social networks. Finally, ‘advertising’ describes the degree with which bloggers use their blogs to advertise and promote events, products and services.

Although many of the motivation categories that emerged from the factor analysis mirror those which have been found in previous blogging motivation studies (e.g. ‘social networking’ is qualitatively similar to Nardi et al’s (2004b) ‘maintaining community forums’), the advertising and selective disclosure categories have been given very little coverage in the literature. Using blogs for advertising may be a relatively recent development or perhaps was just not as prevalent at the time that data from previous studies were collected. This further necessitates the need for continuous research as blog trends continue to evolve.

Using the blog to selectively disclose information implies a level of identity management, which may be a strategic form of self-presentation. Goffman (1959) suggested that we edit presentations of self to make more favourable impressions on others. In blogging, the more traditional presentations of the self, which may be managed in this way, such as clothing, posture, speech patterns, facial expressions, will be substituted by use of text, photographs, and disclosure of personal interests. The online world is a safe haven for exploring different values and beliefs and for testing out new personas, and ultimately seeing how others react to them (Code and Zaparyniuk, 2009). Although some bloggers may not use their blogs socially, the highly interactive nature of blogging for the majority of bloggers implies a level of audience awareness and, on at least some level, an interaction between how the bloggers identify themselves and how their audience identify with them. Blogs may therefore play a fundamental role in the development of one's social identity.

The majority of bloggers in the sample used their blogs in a highly interactive fashion. Most bloggers read other blogs (96.3%), received comments on their own blogs (80%) and provided comments on other blogs (78.1%). Blogs can define new communities by providing a way for bloggers with common interests, and shared cultural identification to develop a group identity and communicate with one another (Hodkinson, 2006; Luehmann and Tinelli, 2008). Community identification is significantly associated with the intention to use blogs (Hsu & Lin, 2008). The social nature of blogging is one of the primary attractions for keeping blogs (Miura and Yamashita, 2007) and we provide further support for this idea.

On the whole, bloggers tended to be highly identifiable, with 33.8% of the sample including their real whole name, 33.8% including a first name only and 67.5% including an image of themselves on their blog profile. Only 21.9% of the sample used a pseudonym, whereas 10.6% included no name at all. These figures are very similar to those provided by Herring et al. (2004a) and suggest that the inclusion of identity information is important to

most bloggers, perhaps because the personal journal nature of blogging encourages identity disclosure (Huffaker and Calvert, 2005).

Although the six blogging motivations should not be considered as distinct (i.e. bloggers may have more than one motivation), individual differences influence the extent to which a blogger is motivated to keep their blog for a specific reason. Women were motivated to keep their blogs for selective disclosure, perhaps because it allows them to put themselves across more favourably. In the offline world, there may be more pressure on women to conform to gender roles. For instance, with reference to social role theory, it has been argued that women are more conforming than men (Eagly and Carli, 1981) and this could be because they are taught to be more agreeable (Eagly, 1987). This finding supports the notion of social compensation (poor-get-richer hypothesis) via the blogging platform. Women can self-promote by selectively disclosing their achievements and accomplishments; meaning that blogging is a socially liberating experience for some women. Indeed, Rogers (1951) argued that people possess a variety of unexpressed qualities and capabilities that they would like to present to others ('the true self') but feel incapable of doing so due to personal and societal constraints. Furthermore, Bargh et al. (2002) assert that individuals are more able to express their 'real me' on the Internet because the online world is more egalitarian. Characteristics of the online world which help people to express their 'true selves' include anonymity and the absence of 'gating features' (e.g. physical appearance) (Bargh et al., 2002).

Men, on the other hand were motivated to write blogs to advertise events, services and products. What is unknown is whether these bloggers were compensated for writing these blogs (for example via a third party like payperpost), whether they were blogging about their own services or products, or whether they were simply blogging as consumers of products who wanted to share their experiences. What we do know is that blogs can serve as a very powerful marketing tool (Pikas, 2005) and there is evidence here to suggest that this is

becoming a more pervasive mode of blogging. The fact that men are more likely to engage in this style of blogging may reflect known gender differences in risk-taking behaviours (Byrnes et al., 1999). However, this relationship is not entirely clear, and it is likely that there are a number of other factors which may have moderated this effect. For instance, considering that many of the participants in the sample were drawn from a student population, it is probable that their financial situation would be quite different from non-student bloggers and this may have encouraged them to use their blogs in this fashion. What is clear is that there is a need to invest more research into this topic to shed further light on this relationship. Men were also more likely to be motivated by a need for emotional expression. This reflects previous findings suggesting that men use their blogs for review or evaluation (Fullwood et al., 2013). Men may also be more confident about expressing their opinions in their blogs (Fullwood et al., 2013). It is also possible that men are freed up within the blogosphere to communicate in a manner that would not be typical of them in the offline world. Men are generally less emotionally expressive than women and this may be because emotional regulation is adaptive for the successful fulfilment of their gender role (Brody and Hall, 2010). Therefore men may feel less pressure when blogging to fit in with traditional male stereotypes.

As expected, open bloggers were motivated to keep their blogs as a creative outlet. This might include, for example, using their blog for creative writing, to share their artistic endeavours (e.g. poetry, artwork) or simply showing the blogging community who they really are by expressing themselves or their opinions in their writing. Indeed, Gill et al. (2009) found that open bloggers tend to more regularly discuss leisure activities (e.g. the arts, music, television) and use their blogs for review or evaluation. The use of blogging as a creative outlet reflects what we know about people who score high in Openness; specifically, they are generally more creative, imaginative and intellectually curious.

Confirming our expectations, Agreeableness was related to blogging for selective disclosure. This reflects previous findings by Gill et al. (2009) who found that agreeable bloggers were more likely to use positive terms when constructing their blogs, whilst avoiding negative topics of discussions. This finding supports social enhancement (rich-get-richer hypothesis) as it suggests a level of identity management on behalf of agreeable bloggers and is perhaps a conscious strategy. Agreeable bloggers may wish to present themselves in a favourable light because they have a desire to be liked by others. Agreeable individuals express more concern for the welfare of others, so in blogging about mainly positive issues they may also be attempting to make others feel good.

An unexpected finding was that Conscientiousness predicted the extent to which bloggers were motivated for social networking. There has been some suggestion in the literature that although Extraversion, Agreeableness and Openness may play an important role in making friendships, Conscientiousness plays a more pivotal role in maintaining them (Selfhout et al., 2010). Furthermore, extraverts are particularly attracted to social networking sites (e.g. see Wilson et al., 2010). This may suggest that social networking sites are good at helping people to make new friendships, whereas blog sites are better at helping individuals to maintain existing friendships. One reason for this could be that blogs facilitate the sharing of highly personal information and, unlike social networking sites, friendship interactions are not played out in such a public way. Unconscientious individuals also use social networking sites more frequently, perhaps because they are procrastinating from other important tasks (Wilson et al., 2010). What it may also imply is a less organised, careless or lazy approach to maintaining and advancing friend networks. Social networking sites allow members to connect with others quickly and simply (e.g. by 'liking' a comment or picture as opposed to leaving a more detailed reply). Members can also communicate with many individuals simultaneously, for example by including one-to-many status updates. Conscientious

individuals may prefer to maintain social networks via blogs because they can connect with others with more care and consideration. Conscientious bloggers may also interact directly with other bloggers without the concern that their interactions will be monitored by the entire community (as would be the case with Facebook) and this perhaps reflects a greater sense of control in how they organise friendship connections.

Finally, bloggers who did not receive comments on their blogs were more likely to selectively disclose information. This makes sense in that the revelation of highly personal and intimate information would be a less risky strategy if we believe that we have a limited audience. What it may also suggest is that bloggers who disclose highly evocative information may be writing for themselves rather than for mass consumption. In this sense, they may be using the blog for catharsis (i.e. to work out personal issues), much in the same way that Nardi et al. (2004b) described.

Overall, the study findings provide a deeper insight into the reasons why individuals construct and maintain blogs. Taken collectively, the findings from this study add further support for the notion that individuals actively seek out specific user options in cyberspace to gratify their individual needs. Moreover, one's personality, sex and age play an important role in dictating what these needs may actually consist of (Orchard & Fullwood, 2010). In addition, the asynchronous nature of blogging, in conjunction with the absence of 'gating features' encourages some bloggers to express their true selves via their blog (Bargh et al., 2002). For some bloggers (e.g. agreeable bloggers), these features may also encourage them to promote an idealised version of the self. There was also evidence to suggest both social compensation and social enhancement via blogging. It could therefore be argued that blogging provides a 'one size fits all' solution to self-promotion and interpersonal communication in the online world. In other words, different types of individuals can gratify very personal and individual needs through the same online application.

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